[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now, we shall take up Matters under Rule 377.

Prof. Om Pal Singh 'Nidar'.

.....*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : Nothing will go on record except what Prof. Om Pal Singh 'Nidar' says.

.....*(Interruptions)**

[Translation]

If you have any special problem, you see the Hon'ble Speaker.

.....*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : You sit down. How can I call you to speak ? I donot know even the matter? You meet the Hon'ble Speaker and tell him about your problems. He has not given me any instruction?

.....*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : You meet him tomorrow.

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13 .34 hrs.

MATTERS UNDER RULE 377

(i) Need to increase Import Duty on Newsprint to save indigenous paper mills from closure

[Translation]

PROF. OMPAL SINGH 'NIDAR' (Jalesar) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, many indigenous paper mills have closed down as imported newsprint is purposely being sold at cheaper rates in the country. Indian newsprint is available at the rate of Rs. 22.23 per Kg., whereas the same type of newsprint is available in foreign countries at Rs. 30 per Kg. But the foreign capitalists are Intentionally selling their newsprint at the rate of Rs. 15-16 per Kg. Government mills such as Nepa Nagar Paper Mills, Khandwa and some private paper mills have closed down as a result thereof.

Therefore, I urge upon the Government to increase the import duty on foreign newsprint so as to enable our industry to face the competition of foreign newsprint industry and all mills including Nepa Mill could be revived and the labourers could be paid their wages without delay.

(ii) Need to take steps for Protection of Medicinal Herbs in Gumala District of Bihar

SHRI LALIT ORAON (Lohardaga) : Mr. Charirman, Sir, the medicinal herbs and plants are on the verge of extinction because of indiscriminate felling of trees and unscrupulous smugglers have eye on them in the districts which have been identified as the most backward districts of Bihar. The local citizens are much concerned over the extinction of these herbs which have been traditionally used for treatment of various diseases. The forest department has neither initiated any positive action to preserve these plants nor is concerned about it. You should know that in this forest covered district many types of herbs like Jangli safed Haldi, Arjun, Ghoravach, Shatawar, Gorakhmundi, Nagarmotha, Harjora, Meda, Karher, Inderjo, Kapoorni, are found in abundance. These herbs have the property to cure fever, jaundice, orthopaedic gynaecological, paeditric diseases and diabeties easily and successfully in traditional manner. The situation has assumed serious proportion due to felling of trees, non implementation of various schemes, increasing population and growing activities of smugglers and as a result thereof it has became quite difficult even to find the general herbs such as 'Aola', 'Harra', 'Bahera' etc. Even after smuggling of hundreds of trucks of 'Meda Chhal' no proper action has been taken against the smugglers active in Jaldega, Palkot, Kolibara, Simdega, Bano, Basia, Bharno, Sisai or Kamdara areas during the last two or three years.

The Central Government is, therefore, requested to take some concrete measures for protection of about 100 species of these medicinal herbs which are on the verge of extinction in the said area.

(iii) Need to entrust maintenance work of National Highway No. 52 between Balipara and Jonai in the North Bank of Assam to the Directorate General of Border Roads

[English]

SHRI ISWAR PRASANNA HAZARIKA (Tezpur) : The National Highway No. 52 running through four border districts of Assam's North Bank providing access to Arunchal and Chinese borders is of vital strategic importance to the country. Presently the highway is in a virtually dilapidated state, partly because of inundation and erosion during rains and floods and partly because little or no maintenance was undertaken by the State PWD during the last couple of years. A few bridges on NH 52, like Solengi near Gohpur have remained perpetually under incomplete construction.

In view of the above and considering the utmost importance of NH 52 close to strategic borders it would be in the best interest of all concerned to transfer the responsibility of maintenance of the highway to the Directorate General Border Roads. The DGBR is already mobillsed and working successfully in the vicinity for the last three decades and it would be well within its capability to undertake this additional responsibility.

The Shukla Committee to suggest measures to bridge the infrastructure gaps in the North East appointed by the Prime Minister has recommended only recently that the maintenance of NH 52 between Balipara to Jonai should be entrusted to DGBR, a view subsequently endorsed by the Standing Committee on Home Affairs of this Parliament.

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* Not recorded.